

State aid: Commission approves €70 million public support scheme for electric buses and charging infrastructure in Germany

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“This scheme is another positive example of how to fight global warming. In line with the EU environmental goals, it will give public transport operators an incentive to invest in low or zero emissions vehicles with the clear objective of reducing CO₂ emissions and improving air quality”*.

The scheme set up by Germany with a budget of €70 million will support public transport operators until the end of 2021, covering the additional costs for:

- the acquisition of **electric and plug-in-hybrid buses** rather than conventional diesel buses; and
- the construction of the **related electric charging infrastructure** required for the operation of these buses.

The Commission considers that this public scheme incentivises bus operators to invest in this type of vehicle and in the necessary charging infrastructure. The measure is expected to increase the number of such buses in Germany and thereby reduce CO₂ and air pollutant emissions, in particular in cities. Furthermore, to qualify for the support, public transport operators must ensure that their electric and plug-in hybrid buses are operated with electricity from renewable sources.

The measure is also in line with the [European Strategy for low-emission mobility](#), and its support for the move towards zero-emission vehicles in cities and for creating a market for such vehicles. Energy efficiency is key to Europe’s clean energy transition and a central element for achieving the Paris Agreement pledge to cut emissions in the EU by at least 40% by 2030.

On this basis, the Commission concluded that the contribution to EU environmental goals of the scheme outweighs any potential distortion of competition brought about by the public financing and has approved it under the EU State aid rules. In this respect, Member States have many options on alternative technologies to reduce exhaust emissions such as retrofitting of diesel buses.

The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.48190 in the [state aid register](#) on the Commission’s [competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. The [State Aid Weekly e-News](#) lists new publications of state aid decisions on the internet and in the Official Journal.

[Daily News 26 / 02 / 2018](#)

Delivering on commitments: EU to adopt new programmes to protect migrants and support return and reintegration in Africa

The European Union is adopting today new programmes under the [European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa](#), directly following up on the commitments made by the Joint African Union – European Union – United Nations Task Force to address the migrant situation in Libya. The new programmes complement ongoing efforts of the European Union to protect migrants and provide them with sustainable reintegration options in Libya, along the Central Mediterranean Route and in Ethiopia. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, said: *“The EU stands by the many African migrants and refugees in need. With these new measures we continue to save and protect lives and tackle the root causes of migration. Because we also want to support people in improving their lives in their home countries and look into the future with hope. The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa allows us to swiftly address the needs of people in despair, and together with our partners, we focus on protecting and supporting return and reintegration of especially vulnerable migrants and refugees.”* Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, affirmed: *“With today’s new programmes we are delivering on the commitments made in the framework of the joint [EU-AU-UN Task Force](#) and increase our already significant on-going support to those in need in Libya. We are actively working to save lives, protect people, as well as offering humane alternatives for people to leave the country and return back home. Equally important, we are working on new measures to support Libyan municipalities enhance the delivery of basic social services and improve local governance for both local and migrant population”.* A [press release will be made available here](#) shortly. (Pour plus d’information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076; Alceo Smerili – Tel. +32 229-64887)

EU maritime strategy in the Atlantic spurs € 6 billion of investments in environmental protection, innovation, connectivity and social inclusion

Half way through the implementation of the [EU’s action plan for a maritime strategy in the Atlantic](#), an [independent study](#) finds it has spurred over 1200 new maritime projects and nearly € 6 billion of investments so far. Most projects target environmental protection and innovation, as well as improved connectivity and social inclusion. Examples include the development of marine renewable energy in France or port facilities in Spain and Ireland, improved tourism infrastructure in Wales, as well as setting up broadband connectivity in remote areas of Scotland or remote health monitoring in Ireland. A number of projects financed by the EU’s action plan help facilitate the clean energy transition, as put forward by the Juncker Commission [‘Clean Energy for all](#)

[Europeans'](#), and contributes to the creation of the [Energy Union](#). Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner responsible for environment, maritime affairs and fisheries, said: *"Identifying investment priorities with the involvement of regions and business can help generate sustainable growth in our coastal areas and drive forward the blue economy. With the action plan, the community of stakeholders in the Atlantic Ocean area has grown stronger and better at raising funds for marine and maritime projects"*. The Atlantic maritime action plan was launched in 2013 to boost the maritime economy of its five Atlantic States, (Portugal, Spain, France, the United Kingdom and Ireland), and their outermost regions and funding comes from the EU (such as from the European Regional Development Fund, Horizon2020), the European Investment Bank as well as national, regional and private sources. By mid-2017, hundreds of initiatives had cropped up and started contributing to these goals and funding. The European Commission will use the results of the independent study – and of the [public consultation](#) that was held last year – to work with Member States to further improve the plan's performance between now and 2020. More information [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 2 29-56185, Iris Petsa – Tel.: [+32 229-93321](#))

Des films soutenus par l'Union Européenne ont remporté l'Ours d'Or et deux Ours d'Argent à la Berlinale

Parmi les films primés lors de la 68ème cérémonie des Berlinale Awards samedi dernier, deux films ont été soutenus par le programme [Europe Créative MEDIA](#) de soutien au développement et à la distribution du cinéma européen. ["Touch Me Not"](#) d'Adina Pintilie a reçu l'Ours d'Or du Meilleur Film, tandis que ["Las Herederas" \(The Heiresses\)](#) de Marcelo Martinessi a remporté le Prix Alfred Bauer de l'Ours d'Argent, qui récompense un film qui ouvre de nouvelles perspectives, et l'Ours d'Argent de la Meilleure Actrice pour la paraguayenne Ana Brun. Le premier long métrage d'Adina Pintilie, ["Touch Me Not"](#), a également reçu le prix du meilleur premier long métrage de GWFF ([Société pour l'administration du droit du cinéma et de la télévision](#)). Cette coproduction entre la Roumanie, l'Allemagne, la République tchèque, la Bulgarie et la France a été soutenue par le programme MEDIA dans sa phase de développement. ["Las Herederas" \(The Heiresses\)](#) est une coproduction du Paraguay, de l'Uruguay, de l'Allemagne, du Brésil, de la Norvège et de la France et a été soutenue par MEDIA via les fonds de coproduction internationaux. Au total, 18 films projetés à la Berlinale ont été développés ou distribués avec un soutien de 895 000 euros provenant du programme [Europe Créative MEDIA](#). Le programme et la liste des intervenants au Forum européen du film sont disponibles [ici](#); plus d'informations sur le programme MEDIA sont disponibles [ici](#) et plus de détails sur les films soutenus par l'UE qui ont remporté l'Ours d'Or et deux Ours d'Argent sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Julia-Henriette Bräuer – Tel.: +32 229 80707)

Commission organises expert workshop on how to tackle fake news and disinformation online

Tomorrow, the European Commission will receive around 100 experts coming from

academia, journalism and the public sector to discuss future actions to tackle the spread of fake news and disinformation online. The discussions of this colloquium will enrich the Commission's reflection on this complex and global issue. Since last November, the Commission has been [consulting](#) citizens, online platforms, news organisations, researchers and public authorities to gather views on how to define a European approach on this phenomenon. In January a [High Level Expert Group](#) on fake news started its work to help develop a strategy to tackle fake news and disinformation online. The results of the public consultation, the findings of High-Level Group, an upcoming Eurobarometer and the discussions of tomorrow's workshop will feed into the initiatives against fake news, which the Commission will present in spring 2018. The debates of the colloquium will be [webstreamed](#). More information on fake news and disinformation online can be found [here](#).

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La Commission approuve une nouvelle indication géographique protégée de France

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription du «Thym de Provence» dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP). Le «Thym de Provence» est, comme son nom l'indique, cultivé en Provence dans le sud-est de la France, et se caractérise par un arôme et un goût puissant et piquant comparé aux autres thym dit «doux». Les producteurs de cette herbe ont une longue tradition de cueillette du thym sauvage, toujours pratiquée, et de procédés anciens de séchage, triage et confection de bouquets de thym. La présence du thym en Provence, et les particularités aromatiques et gustatives du «Thym de Provence» sont souvent citées dans la littérature, de Pline l'Ancien au Ier siècle jusqu'à Marcel Pagnol. Cette nouvelle appellation va rejoindre plus de 1420 produits déjà protégés, dont la liste est disponible dans la base de données [DOOR](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). *(pour plus d'information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 2 29 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)*

State aid: Commission approves €70 million public support scheme for electric buses and charging infrastructure in Germany

The European Commission has found German plans to support the purchase of electric buses and related recharging infrastructure by public transport operators to be in line with EU state aid rules. The measure contributes to reducing CO₂ emissions while limiting distortions of competition. The scheme set up by Germany with a budget of €70 million will support public transport operators until the end of 2021, covering the additional costs for: i) the acquisition of **electric and plug-in-hybrid buses** rather than conventional diesel buses; and ii) the construction of the **related electric charging infrastructure** required for the operation of these buses. The Commission considers that it incentivises bus operators to invest in this type of vehicle and in the necessary charging infrastructure. The measure is also in line with the [European Strategy for low-emission mobility](#), and its support for the move towards zero-emission vehicles in cities and for creating a market for such vehicles. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“This scheme is another positive example of how to*

fight global warming. In line with the EU environmental goals, it will give public transport operators an incentive to invest in low or zero emissions vehicles with the clear objective of reducing CO₂ emissions and improving air quality". A full press release is available in [DE](#), [EN](#), [FR](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

State aid: Commission publishes the non-confidential version of the final negative decision concluding that Luxembourg granted undue tax benefits worth around €250 million to Amazon

Today, the Commission has published the non-confidential version of the [final negative decision](#) adopted on 4 October 2017 concluding that Luxembourg granted undue tax benefits to Amazon of around €250 million. This is illegal under EU state aid rules, because it allowed Amazon to pay four times less tax than other local companies subject to the same national tax rules. The decision is available under the case number [SA.38944](#) on the [competition](#) website. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears creation of a joint venture by Michelin North America and Sumitomo Corporation of Americas

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the creation of a joint venture by Michelin North America, Inc. ("MNAI") and Sumitomo Corporation of Americas ("SCOA"), both of the US. The joint venture will combine MNAI's and SCOA's automotive tyre distribution and installation businesses. It will mainly be active in the US and Mexico. MNAI, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Michelin group, manufactures and sells tyres for a wide range of vehicles in the US, Canada and Mexico. SCOA, a wholly owned subsidiary of Sumitomo Corporation, is active in a wide range of industries, including the sale and retail installation of replacement automotive tyres. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of its minimal foreseen activity in the European Economic Area. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8803](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Malmström participates in Citizens' dialogue on global trade in Sofia, Bulgaria

Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** travels today to Sofia, Bulgaria, where she will take part in a [Citizens' dialogue](#). The session entitled "Global trade – is the EU a leader?" will be for the Commissioner the first occasion this year to engage with the civil society in this format outside Brussels. She will exchange views on the EU's current role on the global

trade scene, as well as the recent and upcoming EU trade agreements. The citizen's dialogue will be [broadcasted](#) by a Bulgarian TV channel. The event will be held ahead of the informal [Trade ministers' meeting](#) to be held in Sofia tomorrow, a usual occasion for the Commissioner to consult trade ministers on most important ongoing trade initiatives led by the Commission. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)

Commissaires Jourová et King participent à la Conférence sur la radicalisation dans les prisons

Demain, mardi 27 février, la Commissaire en charge de la Justice, Consommateurs et Egalité des Genres de l'UE, Věra **Jourová**, ouvrira la [Conférence](#) sur la radicalisation dans les prisons, organisée par la Commission européenne et la Présidence bulgare de l'UE. La conférence rassemble les experts en matière de prison et de probation, et notamment les participants aux projets financés par la Commission dans ce domaine. La Commissaire **Jourová** a déclaré: *“Le poison de la radicalisation se répand à travers l'Europe menant à des attaques terroristes et des attaques contre les valeurs européennes. La propagation de ces idées se fait par deux voies principalement: les prisons et internet. L'action au niveau européen a clairement une valeur ajoutée; d'une part en proposant des solutions européennes contre le contenu terroriste en ligne, et d'autre part, en mobilisant les experts et finançant des projets dans les prisons”*. Julian **King**, Commissaire en charge de l'union de la sécurité, donnera le discours de clôture de la conférence. Retrouvez l'intégralité du discours en anglais de la Commissaire **Jourová** et du Commissaire **King** [ici](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Ernst Tove: +32 2 298 67 64; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

[North Korea: EU aligns sanctions with latest UN Security Council resolution](#)

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The Council **increased the restrictive measures** against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) by finalising the transposition into EU law of the measures imposed by the latest UN Security Council resolution 2397 (2017).

The measures transposed today include:

- the strengthening of the export ban to the DPRK of all **refined petroleum products** by reducing the amount of barrels that may be exported from 2 million barrels to 500,000 barrels per year;
- a ban on imports from the DPRK of **food and agricultural products, machinery, electrical equipment, earth and stone, and wood**;
- a ban on exports to the DPRK of **all industrial machinery, transportation vehicles**, and expansion to **all iron, steel and other metals**;
- further **maritime restrictive measures** against vessels where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the vessel has been involved in the breach of UN sanctions;
- the **requirement to repatriate all DPRK workers abroad** within 24 months, subject to applicable national and international law.

The full prohibition on the export of **crude oil** provided for in resolution 2397 (2017) had already been introduced in the EU on 16 October 2017.

When it adopted the measures, the UN Security Council reaffirmed in its resolution 2397 (2017) that the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitute a **threat to international peace and security**. The EU has repeatedly expressed its expectation that the DPRK engage **in a credible and meaningful dialogue** aimed at pursuing the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

The legal acts adopted today by the Council also took into account that 3 persons and one entity listed by the EU autonomously were now listed by the UN. The number of persons and entities under restrictive measures against the DPRK is 79 persons and 54 entities as listed by the UN and 55 persons and 9 entities designated by the EU autonomously.

The additional listings imposed by the UNSC resolution 2397 (2017) were transposed into EU law on 8 January 2018. The EU had added an additional 17 individuals to its own sanctions list on 22 January 2018.

The EU implements all UN Security Council resolutions adopted in response to the DPRK's nuclear programmes and nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes, and works to ensure their effective implementation by all UN states. In addition, the EU has imposed autonomous restrictive measures against the DPRK, complementing and reinforcing the UN sanctions regime.

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Remarks by President Donald Tusk following the informal meeting of the 27 heads of state or government on 23 February 2018

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Today we discussed the political priorities of the EU that we want to reflect in the post-2020 multiannual budget. Budgetary negotiations are always difficult. However, this time the debate is taking place in a different geopolitical context around Europe and with Brexit in mind. And I am pleased to say that all the leaders approached it with open minds, rather than red lines. We agreed that the EU will spend more on stemming illegal migration, on defence and security, as well as on the Erasmus+ programme. Many leaders stressed the continued importance of cohesion policy, the Common Agricultural Policy, investments in research and innovation, and pan-European infrastructure. It is clear that the priorities are linked with the size of the budget, and in this context we need to address the revenue gap caused by Brexit.

Despite usual differences, all leaders are ready to work on the modernisation of the EU budget and its policies. And many are ready to contribute more to the post-2020 budget.

When it comes to the timing of our negotiations, we agreed that we should aim at speeding up the work, as compared with the previous negotiations. But finding an agreement in the European Council already this year seems really difficult. We will be able to better assess the situation once we have the Commission's proposal.

The second discussion was about the EU institutions, very much a Brussels bubble topic.

We spoke about the new composition of the European Parliament after 2019. Leaders broadly supported the idea that fewer Member States should mean fewer seats, which means reducing the number of MEPs from 751 to 705.

On the issue of lead candidates – the so-called *Spitzenkandidaten* or

Spitzenkandidatinnen – there was agreement that the European Council cannot guarantee in advance that it will propose one of the lead candidates for President of the European Commission. There is no automaticity in this process. The Treaty is very clear that it is the autonomous competence of the European Council to nominate the candidate, while taking into account the European elections, and having held appropriate consultations.

As regards transnational lists, leaders will come back to this issue in the future.

Jean-Claude also presented the idea of a merger of our two posts, but there was no appetite to take this forward. Above all, because it would substantially reduce the role of Member States in the EU.

Today I have also informed the leaders that I will present the draft guidelines on the future EU-UK relationship at the March summit. Our intention is to adopt these guidelines, whether the UK is ready with its vision of our future relations, or not. Naturally it would be much better if it were. But we cannot stand by and wait. I hope to have some more clarity about the UK's plans next week, when I meet Prime Minister May in London.

This evening President Anastasiades and Prime Minister Tsipras informed us about the latest developments regarding Turkey's illegal violations in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Aegean. On behalf of all the EU leaders, I would like to express our solidarity with Cyprus and Greece, and urgently call on Turkey to terminate these activities. I reiterate our support for the sovereign right of the Republic of Cyprus to explore and exploit its natural resources, in accordance with EU and international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

These actions contradict Turkey's commitment to good neighbourly relations and their normalisation with all Member States. We are ready to cooperate with Turkey and will assess at our March European Council whether the conditions are there to hold the Leaders' Meeting with Turkey in Varna on 26 March.

Finally – and I believe – most importantly, on Syria. The Assad regime is brutally attacking innocent men, women and children. Its backers, Russia and Iran, are allowing this to happen. We urge them to stop this violence. The EU calls for an immediate ceasefire, and for providing urgent humanitarian access to and protection of civilians.

Trascript of the questions and answers session:

There won't be automaticity in the selection of the next European Commission President, but do you agree with the assertion of supporters of the Spitzenkandidaten process that it is more democratic? Is the process as written currently in the Treaty less democratic ?

When it comes to the Spitzenkandidat process: the idea that the Spitzenkandidaten process is somehow more democratic is wrong. The Treaty says that the President of the European Commission should be proposed by the

democratically elected leaders of the Member States and that he or she should be elected by the democratically elected members of the European Parliament. This is the double democratic legitimacy of the Commission President. Cutting away any of the two sources of legitimacy, would make it less democratic, not more. Of course, being a Spitzenkandidat doesn't exclude you from becoming the future President of the European Commission. I am absolutely sure it might even increase the chances, it's obvious, but there is not and cannot be no automaticity.

On conditionality, did the remarks made by Chancellor Merkel yesterday had any impact on the debate today? Were there any reactions on conditioning payments out of the next MFF on the reception of refugees?

I've heard only positive reactions to this opinion. I was positively surprised because conditionality was not questioned. For example, Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki said that Poland is also ready to support conditionality, but that conditionality should be built on very objective criteria, but I think this is not a controversial opinion. Today the discussion was very general, but, as for now, the possible conditionality is less controversial than expected.

You will be in London next week. The Cabinet seemed to have agreed on something ambitious "manage divergence". Is this the kind of clarity you are looking for? What are the implications for the guidelines in March on the future relationship you will adopt?

I'm glad that the UK government seems to be moving towards a more detailed position. However, if the media reports are correct, I am afraid that the UK's position today is based on pure illusion. It looks like the "cake philosophy" is still alive. From the very start there has been a key principle of the EU27 that there can be no "cheery picking" and no single market "à la carte". This is and will continue to be a key principle without any doubt. Next week I will meet PM May in London to discuss the UK's position and in March the EU27 will adopt new guidelines as regard the future relationship. I'm absolutely sure that we'll be extremely realistic, as 27, in our assessment of possible new proposals.

About the recent tensions with Poland. Is this the result of a misunderstanding or of a bad will on either sides?

I talked to Prime Minister Morawiecki, on the margins of the meeting. I gave him my assessment of the situation in which Poland has found itself. The conclusions from my meeting with the European leaders, during which I also raised some of these questions, and I tried to defend the good reputation of our country during these talks, which is not a simple task at the moment. I think PM Morawiecki has a clear understanding now of what emerged from our discussion. I told Mr Morawiecki that the situation is very serious and directly affects Polish interests, the reputation of Poland and Poland's standing in the world. There is only one piece of advice I can give: we must do everything to stop the two waves must be stopped. First of all, the wave of bad opinions about Poland and this wave is taking on the proportions of a tsunami. The second wave that must be stopped is the wave of a very

injudicious anti-Semitic excesses in statements been made in Poland. The government has the ways to stop both of these waves if it has the will to do so. We have all done a lot of hard work in Poland over the last 30 years, including me, to ensure that Poland has good relations with the outside world including with Israel and the Jewish community. We can not allow anyone to ruin all that work in the space of just a few weeks. But it is not yet too late for concrete action to be taken. It is not too late for common decency.

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Main topics and media events 26 February – 11 March 2018

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Overview of the main subjects to be discussed at meetings of the Council of the EU over the next two weeks.

Foreign Affairs Council, 26 February

The Council will debate and adopt conclusions on the Republic of Moldova. Foreign ministers will discuss Venezuela, review prospects for the Middle East Peace Process, and prepare for a lunch with representatives of the League of Arab States (LAS). The lunch will be an opportunity to discuss how to pursue further options aimed at achieving a two-state solution jointly with the LAS.

General Affairs Council, 27 February

The Council will begin preparations of the March European Council. The Commission will present its reasoned proposal under Article 7(1)TEU regarding the rule of law in Poland.

General Affairs (Art. 50) Council, 27 February

The Council, in EU27 format, will be informed by the Commission's chief negotiator Michel Barnier about the state of play of the Brexit negotiations with the UK, and will consider a draft annotated agenda for the next European Council (Article 50).

Environment Council, Monday 5 March

The Council will dedicate large parts of the meeting to the circular economy: plastics, chemicals, products, waste and eco-innovation are on the agenda. Ministers will also be informed by the Commission on the proposal for CO2 emission performance standards for cars and for light commercial vehicles. The Council will end with an exchange of views on Greening the European Semester.

Foreign Affairs Council (Defence issues), Tuesday 6 March

Defence ministers will discuss the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). They will then have an exchange of view on security and defence. The Council will then review the EU training missions deployed in Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia. Over lunch, they will discuss cooperation with NATO together with the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

Justice and Home Affairs Council (Home Affairs issues), Thursday 8 March

On Thursday, home affairs ministers are expected to focus mainly on security issues. They will also discuss the state of play regarding migration.

Justice and Home Affairs Council (Justice issues), Friday 9 March

The Council will discuss the directive on non-cash fraud as well as the so called Brussels IIa regulation on matrimonial matters and parental responsibility.

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